

Healthy Habits

1: Stopping

*This series explores some healthy habits that we can adopt in our lives to help us grow closer to God. The first is regularly stopping our other activities to spend time with God. **Please try to do the last exercise.***

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...
Share a particularly peaceful place that you've been to.

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Spend 5 minutes in silence. Each reflect on your day so far – rewind the scenes as if on video. Ask God how he saw some of the events, and talk to him about them in the quiet.

WORD

Read Daniel 6:3-16

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage.

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

Daniel sets aside regular daily times to spend time with God. He does it despite having a very responsible (and no doubt, busy) job. He also risks his life to continue doing it.

- Why do you think he does it?
- How many different benefits can you think of?

Having a pattern of regular times spent with God is hugely beneficial. If Daniel & Jesus needed to do it (Mk1:35 etc), so then surely we do to!
But it's not always easy.

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- As a group, list as many things as you can that stop you from spending time with God – praying and reading the Bible.
- If you have ever had a regular habit of spending time with God, what did you do? What has helped you? Share your ideas.
- Share any resources that have particularly helped you with daily, weekly, monthly or annual patterns – for prayer or Bible reading.
- Daniel has a particular place where he spends time with God (v10). Where do you find it easiest to focus on God (day-to-day places and special places)?
- When Daniel prays, he includes thanks and asking for help (v10-11)
 - * What different types of prayer and Bible reading do you feel are important on a regular basis?
- **Please all try this!** On paper, each start to work out a pattern for how you could aim to spend time with God daily, weekly, monthly & annually. This is sometimes called a 'rule of life'. Whether you are starting from zero or lots, try and stretch yourself a little, but be realistic! ...and when you fail, don't be hard on yourself or give up!
 - * Talk about your ideas and struggles in 2s/3s.
 - * Now pray for one another. Try and continue the process at home.

HELP! You can find help with spending time with God and reading the Bible at <http://www.christchurchalsager.uk/getting-involved.html#Bible>

WHAT NEXT?

- **CHALLENGE:** On your own, work out your own realistic 'rule of life' (or 'rhythm of life') – for spending dedicated time with God – maybe with a daily, weekly, monthly & annual pattern.
- **FURTHER READING :** To explore this theme more, you could try reading (or re-reading) 'The Life You've Always Wanted' by John Ortberg, 'Holy Habits' by Andrew Roberts or an older classic 'Celebration of Discipline' by Richard Foster

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2: Bible Reading

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

Share: Do you read much? If so, what, when, how and why?

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Share as many words as you can that describe the Bible. Each write one or two on small pieces of paper (eg Post-its or similar). Lay them out as a 'path' on a table. Place a lamp or candle beside it. Read out Psalm 119:97-105. Finish with a prayer of thanks to God for his word.

WORD

This reading is set in about 640BC, when Israel is split in two. The northern kingdom has repeatedly turned away from God and has now been destroyed. The southern kingdom (Judah) has done a bit better, and Josiah now becomes king. He decides to renovate the temple, but in the process, the High Priest, Hilkiah makes a discovery...

NB The 'book of the law' is probably Deuteronomy.

Read 2 Kings 22:1-13 and 23:1-3

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

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The story implies that the whole nation had got out of the habit of reading the Bible on a big scale for a long time.

- Why do you think rediscovering part of it was such a big deal?
 - * How did the king and people respond?
 - * Have you ever 'rediscovered' a part of the Bible?

Josiah gets help from one of God's prophets, Huldah, in understanding the Bible.

- How have other people helped you understand the Bible?
- What else has helped you read or understand the Bible?
- How can you read the Bible more regularly?
- How can you remind yourself of Bible verses or stories more regularly?
- How can you help others to understand the Bible?

Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

- How can all scripture be 'God-breathed' and 'useful'?
- Which parts do you find it easiest/hardest to read or understand?
- In what ways do you think our society might change if people 'rediscovered' the Bible in the UK today?

WHAT NEXT?

- Pray for one another, our church, community and nation – in particular that we would take the Bible more seriously and communicate it effectively.
- Pray for our current Alpha Course – the guests, team and church.
- Talk about how you're getting on with developing a personal pattern for spending regular times with God – as per the notes for week 1.

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3: Giving

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...
Do you ever play games? How competitive are you?

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Write down as many words as possible to describe God. (eg loving, creator etc). Now say one-line prayers to God using these words. eg 'God, you're the creator'; 'Thank you God you're loving' etc

WORD

The first reading is set just before the death of King David, around 1000BC. He is preparing for his son, Solomon, to build the temple.

Read 1 Chronicles 29:1-14; Mark 12:41-44; Proverbs 3:5-10;

Discuss your initial reactions to the passages:

- Does anything in these passages jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- Imagine a parent buys their child a bag of sweets. The parent then asks the child for some of the sweets, but the child is reluctant.
 - * How might the parent and the child feel? Why?
 - * What parallels could there be with our attitude towards God?
- Re-read 1 Chronicles 29:14.

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- * What attitudes does David have towards his money and possessions?
- * If we adopted David's view of things, how might it affect our use of our money and possessions?
- * How do we give to God? The people here gave towards the worship in the temple. Elsewhere we're encouraged to give to the poor. What guidelines do you think we should use in working out how and what to give?
- Re-read Mark 12:43-44
 - * Elsewhere in the Bible, giving a tenth is a 'norm' (something the Pharisee is proud of in Luke 18:12). How does this contrast with Jesus' example of the widow?
 - * David highlighted what the wealthy gave. Jesus uses a widow as an example. How do Jesus' comments challenge your view of your giving or the giving of others?
- Re-read Proverbs 3 verses 5 & 9
 - * How does trusting God affect our attitude towards giving to God?
 - * In what different ways can we 'honour the Lord with our wealth'?
 - * Verse 9 mentions 'firstfruits'. How do our priorities affect how we give to God?

WHAT NEXT?

- Give thanks and pray for the finances of the church and for those who administer them – including the Treasurer and PCC (Church Council). To find out more about the church's finances, have a look at 'Giving for Growth' on our website or in the porch.
- Pray for the 'Far Out' organisations that we support as a church. There's more information on our website.
- (Maybe in 2s/3s) Talk honestly about how you're getting on with spending regular times with God – as per the notes for week 1.
- Pray for one another.

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4: Prayer Week

This week, please have a Prayer Week. There's a separate set of notes on the church website at the top of the Growth Group Notes Page.

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5: Gathering

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

Each share a time when you've been at a big gathering of people. What did you like or dislike about it?

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Each take 3 minutes to have a look through some of the Psalms in silence and choose a few verses that strike you. Now each read them out to the group in turn.

WORD

Read Hebrews 10:23-25

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

v25 encourages Christians to make a habit of meeting together. On a big piece of paper or small pieces or post-its:

- 1: List all the different occasions you can think of that Christians might gather together.

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- 2: On another piece of paper: List as many benefits as possible of Christians gathering together. It may help to think about:
 - * 'Up' (worshipping God), 'In' (time with one another) & 'Out' (the effect on others)
 - * If Christians didn't meet together, what would be the impact?
- What things make it difficult for you or others to meet together? Are there things you can do to encourage or help one another meet together?
- Are there also ways you could encourage and care for one another when you're not gathered together?
- Who do you know who is good at encouraging? How could you get better at making a habit of encouraging others? (v24-25)

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-20

- In 2s or 3s, talk about what you think one another's gifts are and how you could use them more effectively in the life of the church and in your daily life.

WHAT NEXT?

- Talk about how you're getting on with your personal pattern for spending regular times with God – as per the notes for week 1.
- Use the first sheet of paper above to pray for different gatherings of Christians.
- If you want to meet more in groups of 2-5 encouraging one another in your faith, you could try using 'Growing Stronger' – which you will find at the bottom of the Growth Group Notes page of the website.